

VZCZCXRO4036  
PP RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHPB  
DE RUEHKO #1843 0960753

ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 060753Z APR 06  
FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0603  
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 5550  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 5545  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 8179  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 8707  
RUEHKSO/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 6728  
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC 8221  
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS TOKYO 001843

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AIAG AMBASSADOR LANGE  
DEPT FOR OES/IHA SINGER AND FENDRICK  
DEPT FOR EAP/J  
USDA PASS TO APHIS  
HHS PASS TO CDC  
HHS FOR OGHA STEIGER, BHAT AND ELVANDER

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: TBIO KFLU KSTH ECON PREL SOCI WHO JA

SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA: JAPAN WEEKLY REPORT APRIL 6

REF: A. 05 STATE 153802

1B. TOKYO 1693 AND PREVIOUS

1C. TOKYO 295

1D. TOKYO 163

11. The following is an update on avian influenza (AI) developments in Japan for the period March 30 to April 6. No human or animal outbreaks of H5N1 avian influenza were reported in Japan during the past week.

-- Ibaraki Governor: "MHLW is Irresponsible" --

12. On April 4, Ibaraki Governor Masaru Hashimoto criticized the central government's response to the potential infection of more than 70 individuals in the Prefecture with the H5N2 avian influenza virus, as reported earlier in refs C and D. The Governor said that the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare (MHLW) should have been more "alarmed" by the findings, and should have taken concrete actions rather than simply announcing the results of its earlier tests that detected the presence of H5N2 antibodies in the individuals. Hashimoto said that Ibaraki Prefecture would have to take actions of its own, because MHLW was "irresponsible."

Q3. MHLW and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases (NIID) conducted tests on more than 300 individuals who were employed at poultry farms or were involved in the culling of chickens infected with the low pathogenic strain of avian influenza. As a result of the investigation, the central government announced in January that more than 70 individuals had tested positive for H5N2 antibodies. The Prefecture claimed that because the testing methods used were unproven (or pending) and that individuals with no known contact with infected poultry also tested positive for the antibodies, a second round of tests using a different methodology was needed.

14. The Prefectural government has decided to conduct its own tests starting in mid-May, and will use viral samples provided by the National Institute of Agriculture located in Tsukuba City. The tests will be conducted on individuals who were not associated with the infected areas. In order to establish an appropriate epidemiologic

case definition (antibody titers), Ibaraki will test a total of 100 residents (50 from urban areas and 50 from rural areas) who were not connected with the poultry farms. They will use the titer as criteria for positivity.

-- Stinky Natto May be Healthier Than You Think --

15. A joint research team from the Yamasa Corporation, a soy source maker, and the University of Shizuoka has announced that it has successfully developed a new method to easily detect signs that mutations have occurred in the avian influenza virus that could potentially lead to a pandemic strain. The team led by Professor Takashi Suzuki fixed portions of human and animal cells on test plates using the sticky components of fermented soybeans (or natto) to examine mutations in the virus. Suzuki claims that the new detection method is more sensitive than currently existing ones. An animal health institute in Thailand has started using this method to monitor changes in the avian flu virus on a trial basis. (Note: Natto is a popular Japanese side dish made of sticky fermented soybeans that has a very pungent smell, often offensive to the uninitiated. End note).

SCHIEFFER